

Carlo Vittadini (1800 – 1865)

Carlo Vittadini, the son of farmers, was born on 11 June 1800 in Monticelli, a hamlet of San Donato Milanese in the municipality of Milan in northern Italy. He studied initially at Milan and then at the University of Pavia, where he was a student and assistant to the professor of botany and director of the botanic garden, Giuseppe Moretti. In 1826 he graduated in medicine with a thesis describing and illustrating fourteen *Amanita vittadini* mushroom species, including *Amanita vittadini*, which was dedicated to him by Moretti.

Taking up the challenge of Elias Fries, professor of botany at the University of Uppsala, he then devoted himself to the study of the underground hypogeous fungi, usually known as truffles. He visited the markets of Pavia and Milan, and walked the length and breadth of the region with truffle hunters. From his research, he produced *Monographia Tuberacearum*, with five colour plates and descriptions of 65 species, 51 of them new, and came to be regarded as the father of modern truffleology – the study of truffles.

His university years over, he took up his medical career as an obstetric surgeon at a major hospital in Milan. However he still made time for his mycological interests. At the invitation of the government, which was concerned about the numerous incidents of mushroom poisoning, he published in 1835 his best-known work, *Description of the Most Edible Mushrooms in Italy*. The 56

species described included 15 new species, and were accompanied by 44 colour plates. Six years later his *Monographia Lycoperdineorum*, in which he described 50 species, 23 of them previously unknown, won a Turin Academy of Sciences competition.

In 1852 he made a major breakthrough in the culture of the muscarine fungus later identified as *Botrytis paradoxa* (a synonym of *Beauveria bassiana*), which at that time was ravaging the silkworm industries of Italy and France. He was then able to describe the spores, their presence in the silkworm eggs and the developmental stages of the disease.

Meanwhile he became very ill with tuberculosis, and on 20 November 1865 he died in Milan.

Today, Carlo Vittadini is virtually unknown except to a few scholars interested in his work or in the origin of a plant name. The New Zealand endemic *Vittadinia australis* (white fuzzweed) was collected in 1769 at Tolaga Bay and drawn by Sydney Parkinson on Cook's first voyage. French botanist Achille Richard described and named it in his *Essai d'une Flore de la Nouvelle-Zélande*, the first of the two-volume botanical section of Dumont d'Urville's official record of the 1826–1829 *Astrolabe* expedition, published in 1832. The type locality is French Pass in the Marlborough Sounds.

Vittadinia australis

Vittadinia, a small genus of about 28 species of daisies commonly known as fuzzweed, is predominantly Australian. The single endemic New Zealand species is the type. *Vittadinia australis* ('southern') is a spreading herb up to 30 cm tall, with a stout root. The younger stems and dull green 3-5 lobed leaves are sparsely to densely hairy; the small daisy flower-heads with white petals and yellow centres, occur singly at the branch tips, and are followed by fluffy, round seed heads. It favours stony eroding tussock grassland, dry hill slopes, rock outcrops and riverbeds in the drier eastern lowland to low alpine regions of the North and South Islands, but has declined in large parts of its range. The two introduced species have purple flowers and tightly pressed stem hairs.

